October Big6 strategy:  Task Definition

Common Core standard:  Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

I have decided to work in some of the strategies now that I already teach with the research paper I do in the spring.  One thing we do is that students select their own subjects of interest, narrowing them down enough to make a good topic.

My objectives for this activity were:

                TSW demonstrate understanding of the concepts of “broad” and “narrow,” by labeling topics as such.

                TSW select topics that are suitable (not too broad or too narrow) for research.

                TSW narrow a subject to a suitable topic.

I began with a discussion/demonstration of the concepts of “narrow” and “broad.”

I used the board and the ELMO to do a whole-class activity.

After we had done this, I put up the 5 related questions from the TRAILS assessment and had students select the correct answer.  I explained any that they were still missing (though there were very few,) and we compared the results of this assessment with the original.  My students had done well on the original, but after our discussion of selecting a topic, there were only a couple of wrong answers overall on our second go-round with the assessment.

After this,  we narrowed a subject together down to a suitable topic and I had them select 2 of 5 possible subjects to narrow down.  Narrowing their own topic was more difficult for them than selecting the appropriately narrowed one out of a list.  For the ones who were not successful the first time, I gave them feedback and had them try it again.  A couple of students did this a third time before they arrived at an appropriate topic.  In the end, all were successful.  I intend to come back to this skill from time to time before their research paper.

I also gave them the task definition graphic organize,r and we used it to break down a complicated assignment.  We also discussed its use in everyday life, with me giving the example of planning my son’s graduation party with all the attendant pre-planning.